

For the Use of  
Students  
From the Author

THE  
ART OF ETCHING  
AND  
AQUA TINTING, &c.









THE  
ART OF ETCHING  
AND  
*AQUA TINTING,*

STRICTLY LAID DOWN

By the most approved Masters;  
Sufficiently enabling Amateurs in Drawing  
to transmit their Works to Posterity;

OR,

As Amusements among their Circle of Friends.



*J. B. S. & Co. Published by J. Barker Sep. 4<sup>th</sup> 1794*

To which is added,  
The most useful LIQUID COLOURS, well adapted  
for staining and colouring the above, &c. &c.

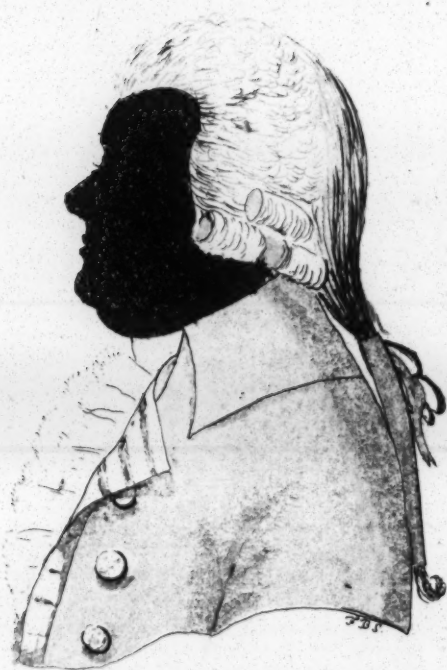
With a Specimen of  
LANDSCAPE AND PROFILE.

By F. YRUBSLIPS.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BARKER, at the *Dramatic Repository*, Russell-  
Court, Drury-Lane.

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T O

# Amateurs of Drawing.

*Gentlemen and Ladies,*

**P**ERMIT me to solicit your protection of the following work, being myself an amateur, and knowing by experience the pleasure I have enjoyed in transmitting to copper the small productions of my pencil, at the same time the difficulties I have experienced before I could accomplish any thing permanent, the extreme secrecy of the artists, and the high price they demand for instruction, all conspiring to retard my progress to the accomplishment of an object of so great utility as Aqua Tinting. The methods laid down in the following sheets are from accurate observations,

B

and

and I hope those who may improve from them, will with equal candour give their observations to the public. Artists, professors of this branch of engraving, may I doubt not despise it, or more likely disapprove of it, from other mercenary views, but I by no means think it can injure them, but show their superiority; besides, there are, I am persuaded, numbers of Gentlemen and Ladies who would etch and tint their productions for their circle of friends, that never would be at the expence of employing an artist; by this means we shall in time receive a public benefit. Others that have original designs from old masters, can copy them correctly, and hand them down to posterity, when the original is lost in oblivion. At the same time

I shall

I shall lay before you the method of making transparent colours, and the various modes to colour the print or drawing, making a useful pocket companion.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your most obedient

humble Servant,

**THE AUTHOR.**





*Of the Utensils, Instruments, &c. necessary for the  
Work.*

**B**EFORE any person can attempt to aquatint or engrave from any drawing, he should first be supplied with the following instruments, viz. A copperplate rather larger than your drawing, etching needles of various sizes, engraver's burnisher, scraper, camel's hair and black lead pencils, a rule and compasses, dilute spirit of nitre, engraver's wax, varnish, spirit of wine, spirit of turpentine, rosin, gum mastic, Burgundy pitch, treacle or sugar, whitening, a small piece of pumice stone, ditto of charcoal, a stone to set your engraver, and point your needles. Those who have been in the habit of engraving or etching, may possibly suppose it needless, and filling up the work, by giving a slight description of them; it may be so, but there are numbers who have never seen or heard of them, and here it becomes absolutely necessary.

*On the Copperplate.*

Gentlemen or Ladies residing in large towns may at all times be furnished with them at the

|  
copper-

coppersmith's, ready prepared, at a small expence; but when, on the contrary, this cannot be had, procure a piece of copper from a brazier, rather larger than your drawing, let them planish it well, a great deal depending there on the goodness of your plate, when this is done, take a piece of fine pumice stone, and with water rub it (all one way) until the bruises are entirely out; the next operation is with the charcoal, work in the same manner till the scratches are removed, last burnish with oil, and your plate is ready.

Etching needle, a pointed instrument, of various sizes, they are for to trace or etch the outlines of the drawing (thicker or thinner, according to the original ~~copy~~) through the varnish to the plate, to enable the aquafortis to corrode the same.

Engraver, is only required to repair a plate, or where a deep stroke, or the nature of the view or person, &c. is wanted, there are various kinds of them, the middling size is best; when they  
are

are used, it is necessary to have a bag of sand under the plate, on which it turns.

Burnisher, a steel instrument, highly polished, with a rounded edge; this is not only necessary in finishing the plate, but to take off any scratches, &c. or lighten parts where the tint may have been too deep.

Scraper, a steel instrument, to take out any deep injuries or mistakes that may occur, they are in general made three-square and concave; an old razor, the edge ground square, is no bad apology.

#### No. 1.

##### *Aqua Fortis, for the Work.*

Take of strong smoking spirit of nitre, two ounces, pure water, eight ounces, having the nitrous acid in a large wide mouth glass stopper bottle, pour in the water gradually under a chimney, to avoid the fumes, and it is fit for use.

#### No. 2.

##### *Engraver's Wax.*

Is in general purchased at the wax-chandler's; it is too soft, and requires half of its weight of yellow

yellow wax to bring it to a proper consistence, or you may use the following: [take of yellow wax, two ounces, rosin, one ounce.]

*Varnishers.*

[ Are the hard and soft; turpentine or mastic, and asphaltum.

Hard and soft varnish are to be purchased at the engraver's, ready prepared, or at the colour-shops, or you may make them in the following manner:

No. 3.

*Hard Varnish.*

Take of Burgundy pitch and rosin, of each five ounces, asphaltum, one ounce, first melt the asphaltum, then add the other ingredients, when melted, strain it, and when cold, tie it in a muslin bag.

No. 4.

*From Rembrandt.*

Take asphaltum, mastic, amber, of each half an ounce, wax, one ounce, melt them, and make them into rolls, or balls, as above.

*Another*



No. 5.

*Another Soft Varnish.*

Take of wax, three ounces, mastich, two ounces, asphaltum, two ounces, melt and strain, and make into balls as above.

When I have had only hard varnish by me, I have, while the plate is warm, put a little tallow with it, and then it answers every purpose of soft varnish.

No. 6.

*Turpentine Varnish.*

Take of yellow rosin, four ounces, spirit of turpentine, six ounces, powder the rosin, digest with the turpentine in a gentle heat, till all is dissolved.

No. 7.

*Mastich Varnish.*

Take of gum mastich, four ounces, finely powdered, oil of turpentine, eight ounces, digest in a gentle heat, till dissolved, then pour off.

These varnishes are only used for stopping out, of which hereafter.

## No. 8.

*Asphaltum Varnish.*

Take asphaltum, or Jew's pitch, four ounces, spirit of turpentine, eight ounces, and digest as above.

This is the most useful varnish, for it answers all the purposes of the others for etching, being laid thin on the plate with a camel's hair brush; its other uses will be mentioned hereafter.

*Grounds for Aquatinting.*

The substances of which I have hitherto been acquainted with for aqua tinting, are, yellow rosin, gum mastich, or juniper, and Burgundy pitch. The two first are coarse grounds, and require nothing more than to be finely powdered, and passed through fine sieves upon the plates; the latter is exceeding fine, and is prepared in the following manner:

## No. 9.

*Fine Ground.*

Take of spirit of wine, eight ounces, Burgundy pitch, four ounces, dissolve and filter through paper; this liquid ground is then ready for use.

*On Etching, or tracing from a Drawing or Copy.*

Take some oiled or varnished paper, lay it over the drawing or copy, and with a black lead pencil trace the outlines correctly; before you take it entirely away, lift up one of the corners, and pass a piece of clean writing paper underneath, to observe if there are any defects, which correct; it is then ready to be reversed on the plate.

*Preparing your Plate.*

Take a copperplate rather larger than the drawing or copy, screw it to a small hand vice, having a piece of paper between, hold it over the flame of twisted brown paper (the back side to the flame) till it is hot enough to melt the varnish in the bag No. 3, &c. but not to burn it, spread the varnish thinly over it, then with a bag made of fine muslin filled with cotton, dab it till it is perfectly even, then take a large candle, or a number of wax tapers twisted together, holding now the varnished side downwards, to receive the smoke, and when equally black, let it cool.

*Tracing*

*Tracing it on the Varnish.*

When the varnish is cool, take the tracing on the oil paper, and reverse it (between it and the plate there must be a prepared thin piece of paper) the side next the plate rubbed with red chalk, the superfluities blown off, fasten them at the corners with a piece of wax, then with a blunted etching needle repeat the tracing, when finished, lift up one of the corners, and observe if there be any thing missing, which repair.

*Tracing it on the Plate.*

Having finished your tracing as above, take off your papers, and with an etching needle, of a proper size of the drawing, again trace through the varnish, observing now to correct to the greatest nicety, changing your needle, or laying on deeper, as the copy or shade require. If you trace on soft varnish (you must have a board raised above the plate, or even, if your plate is large, to keep your hand from hurting the varnish) the lines will appear broken, which some prefers from the ease and elegance it gives, appearing like chalk, or black lead drawing.



*On biting the Work.*

When the outlines are finished, set the plate on a board, and then take the engraver's wax, dipped in warm water, and make it in a long roll, which press round your work, forming a rim or trough, at one corner make a spout to pour off the aquafortis, pour on then gently the acid, and observe if the air bubbles rise fast, with a loud hissing noise, if it does, it is too strong, and must be lowered with a small portion of water; in general, it will take about twenty minutes, pour off the fluid, and wash the plate with water, then with your scraper take off a small portion of varnish, to see if it is deep enough, if not, with a pencil put on a little mastich or turpentine varnish, when dry, pour back the aquafortis, when this is done, wash the plate, take off the wax rim, and pour a little oil of turpentine on it, and with a piece of felt made into a roll, rub off the varnish, clean again, then get a proof, and where the faults are, correct. This is frequently done in imitations of the original drawings, the shadowing and colouring afterwards filled up with India ink, or colours,

colours, in such a manner as scarcely to know the original from the copy; some make at the same time the mounting, on the plate.

*First Method of Aqua Tinting the above Design.*

*Of laying the Ground.*

Take your plate, clean it well from any grease with a little spirit of wine, when dry, lay it on a table, then take some fine powdered rosin, or gum mastich, in a fine lawn sieve, shake it over it till it is covered, then put it into a hand vice, screw it fast, strike the edge of it on a table, till no more will fall off, it should now appear uniformly covered with a thin coat of the powder.

*Fixing the Ground.*

Take a piece of twisted paper, light it, and hold it under the plate, till you observe the rosin to change brown, as soon as this takes place, immediately remove it to a cool place; if you was to continue your heat too long, the particles of the rosin or gum would run together, and the  
aqua fortis

aquafortis would not get at the copper, or, at least, partially, and spoil the plate ; on the contrary, if not sufficient, the ground would rise on the pouring on the strong water ; but by following the above rule, and a little experience, will soon make it familiar.

*First Method of Shadowing, commonly called Blotting out.*

The plate prepared as above before you, also your copy, turpentine varnish in a shell, mixed with a little lamp black, camel's hair brushes in sticks, by the side of you, then observe the light parts, I mean where there are no shadows, as they are, so with the varnish cover them in your plate, place a rim of wax round it, as for etching, then gently pour on the aquafortis. As these are for the fine tints, the fluid must be removed almost immediately, in about one minute pour a little water on the plate, and when dry, repeat the operation on the light shadows with the varnish, again pour on the acid, and in about two minutes remove it ; repeat the operation on the next shade, and remove in about three minutes ;

if

if there is above three distinct shades, which there seldom is in any drawing or painting, repeat the stopping and filling until finished, then take off the wax, and clean the plate, as described in page 17. In this method of aquatinting, there is always a roughness of the edges, and a general stiffness throughout the piece. It will always be necessary to know the strength of your aquafortis before you begin, by a spare piece of copper, with a ready made ground, by a watch, to know the tint that is formed in 1, 2, 4, 6 or 8 minutes, and to compare them to your drawing, yet it is necessary that they should be much darker, on account of the plate wearing in taking off the impression; having cleaned your plate, have another proof taken off, compare it with your copy, and correct what may be wanting, if too deep, your burnisher will remove it, also, in some measure, the harsh edges, if any place has missed, it must be retouched by a fresh ground. ]

*Second Method of Aquatint Engraving.*

*Of Fixing the Ground.*

This method is far superior to the former, having all the ease of drawing, the shadows  
being



being worked on the plate with a pencil, in the same manner as on paper, with Indian ink, but here we have an additional mixture, nor any stopping out. The ground may be laid on as the former, with rosin or mastich, or with the solution of Burgundy pitch, as in No. 9, by means of a large camel's hair pencil, observing to lay it even at once, and when dry, it is fit for the following

No. 10.

*Shadowing Composition.*

Take of treacle what quantity you please, make it by grinding into a paste, with whitening. Or,

No. 11.

Take of coarse sugar, two ounces, whitening, one ounce, water, a sufficient quantity to form a paste.

*Method of using the Shadowing Mixture.*

Having traced and laid your ground as before-mentioned, take a camel's hair pencil, a size suitable to the proportion of your work, dip it in water, and work it with the above mixture,

D

then



then draw all your shades on the plate, in the same manner as with Indian ink, remembering this time to cover every shade, the foliage of the leaves, &c. exactly to your copy, let it quite dry, then take the varnish, No. 8, and with a camel's hair brush, cover the whole plate, let it dry also, then plunge the plate into water; in the space of one minute you will see the composition imbibing the water, and breaking through the varnish in every part you have drawn, leaving the varnish firm on the other parts, impossible for the nitrous acid to effect it, but not in the least injuring the ground; make a rim round the plate of wax, as before-mentioned, pour in the aquafortis, and according to the strength the first shadow requires, pour it off, dip the plate in cold water, and let it dry; then with the composition proceed to the second shade; when dry, cover the whole of the plate with the varnish, and for raising the treacle or sugar mixture, proceed as before directed, with the water biting in, &c. thus proceeding till the whole is finished. Clean the plate, and procure a proof, which repair as before-mentioned.

GENERAL

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Be careful that your aquafortis be not too strong, otherwise it will not only make the work rough, but at the same time will break up the varnish and ground in places that would inevitably spoil the plate; always try your liquor on a spare piece of copper first, have by you the mastich varnish in a shell, ready to apply by a brush to the part that may accidentally be so injured. It is much better to have the three shades too dark than light, as it is much easier to alter them by means of the burnisher than again tint it for them; it has this disadvantage in re-tinting, you seldom can again match the shade; nay, it frequently happens that the second obliterates the first. Be sure to fasten perfectly secure the bordering wax to the plate, especially if Ladies are tinting, I would advise some varnish round the edges, if it escapes, pour it out, wash dry, secure the wax, and begin again, it is much better to take this trouble than to endanger your plate and cloaths. The mastich ground is well adapted for clouds and buildings,  
it

it is coarser than the rosin, the Burgundy pitch ground for the fine touches, the foliage of leaves, deep shadows of branches, windows, grass, in the fore ground, and figures; profiles for the face a deep tint of fine rosin, and when finished with it, heightened and retouched by the liquid ground. In some cases I would use all the three grounds, as first, the gum mastich, second, rosin, and third, the liquid.

By the same rules you may aquatint on glass, changing the solvent (i. e. aqua fortis) for the sparry acid, which is made in the following manner:

#### No. 12.

##### *Acid for Glass Etching.*

Get a plumber to make a leaden retort and receiver, the retort to hold one pint, or in proportion to the quantity of acid required; then to one pound of sparry fluor, or Derbyshire blue John, powdered, pour three parts of concentrated vitriolic acid, placing a portion of water in the receiver, about ten or twelve times the weight of the spar, at first with a gentle heat, encreasing it to boiling, distil to dryness, what comes

comes over, and unites with the water, is the corroding liquor, and must be kept in a leaden vessel, it dissolving glass with nearly the same ease as aquafortis does copper.

*Observations on Etching.*

Though in the course of this work some observations have been made, yet it is necessary to add the following. In some old masters their original designs are made with a common pen, here your needle must be ground with an oval point, by which means you will be able to make the full and fine strokes, in exact imitation of the original drawing; if with a crow pen, a thinner needle, the point a longer oval; if with a reed pen, a dull round-pointed needle. It will sometimes happen, when you have cleaned your plate, your first outlines are not deep enough, as it is impossible to deepen them by etching over again, a celebrated engraver has invented the following method.

Warm a spare piece of copper, over which melt a little hard varnish, take the bag of cotton, (fine thin silk is better, leaving no down on the

E

varnish)



varnish) dab it over the plate, warm the plate which wants biting deeper, then work it gently all over with the bag, raise a rim round, and eat it in. Copying writing may be etched in the above manner, or by laying it on the plate, covered with white wax, rub it hard with a burnisher, the writing will then be reverted on the wax, trace it with a large oval needle, or cut it out with the engraver.

*On Printing Aquatints.*

These may be printed either in black, brown, or blue; in either of these colours, when well executed, they look extremely well, yet may be improved, according to fancy, by washing with other colours; for instance, the black impression with orange, yellow, red, blue, or brown; the brown with orange or red; the blue by having the figures only coloured; again, they may have them printed in colours after the copy. All colours for the washing aquatints should be transparent liquid colours, the preparation of which I shall treat of hereafter. Almost every person has a peculiar style of drawing and colouring; for instance, some, after finishing

India



Indian ink, washes it over with orange, only colouring the figures; others mix a small portion of Prussian blue with the Indian ink, colouring only the fore ground and figures; others shadow with Indian Prussian blue and lake, colouring the fore ground and figures; again, others mix the colours with the ink as they proceed; while others finish and shadow entirely with colours; again, others shadow with bistre and colours, or with Indian ink and Indian red mixed, this has great warmth; some in finishing use here and there body colours for fine touches, as trees, &c. however, let the drawing be which it will, the aquatint should be printed in a colour nearest to the principal shade, if a number of copies is to be obtained near to the original, otherwise proceed as before directed. Aqua tints, which want only a simple stain, French paper of all others takes the finest impressions, but they require to have a wash of alum-water, to hinder the colour from sinking through, which should always be done on the back of the print; some have used a solution of gum tragacanth, but I prefer the former.

*Th.*

*The Preparation of transparent Colours for  
Washing Prints and Drawings.*

These may be divided under the following heads, viz. red, brown, yellow, orange, blue, purple, and green; from these various combinations may be formed, nearly imitating every tint of nature.

No. 1.

*Liquid Carmine.*

Take one ounce of fine carmine, boil it in a clean earthen ware Dutch pot, in one quart of distilled water, when it has boiled for four or five minutes, add to it by degrees the same quantity of spirit of sal ammoniac, (your pot must be large, otherwise it will flow over) but take care it does not burn, otherwise it will be brown, boil it for two minutes longer, then take it off, and when settled, pour off the clear, save the dregs, and by repeating the operation, you will have a fine colour, though inferior to the former.

No. 2.

No. 2.

*A fine Liquid Red, from Brazil.*

Take one pound of Brazil, finely ground, boil it in four quarts of clarified urine, keep it constantly stirring, when you take it off the fire, add to it four ounces of Roman alum, in fine powder, let it settle, then pour off the clear for use.

*N.B.* If you want it deeper, evaporate it either in the sun, or on the fire carefully, to the colour wanted, gum it with gum Arabic.

No. 3.

*Fine Liquid Violet.*

Take of campeachy (i. e. log wood) and treat it as above, excepting instead of Roman alum, use glacial alum, (i. e. common alum) gum with gum Arabic.

No. 4.

*Liquid Yellow.*

Take of yellow berries, two pound, urine, four quarts, bruise the berries fine, boil it till  
half

half is evaporated, then add half a pound of common alum, gum with gum Arabic.

### No. 5.

#### *Fine Liquid Orange.*

Take one pound of anotto, break it in eight pints of urine, boil it for one hour, then throw in half a pound of pearl ashes, take care it does not burn, boil for another half hour, take it off, and let it settle, pour off the clear for use.

*N. B.* The dregs by repetition will again form a beautiful colour.

### No. 6.

#### *Liquid Blue.*

Take of fine Prussian blue, what quantity you please, make it into a paste, with spirit of salt, let it lay for forty-eight hours, after which, mix it with water, and gum with gum tragacanth.

Or,

Take of indigo (Spanish) a quarter of an ounce, oil of vitriol, two ounces; dissolve, then add of the earth of alum, a sufficient quantity to saturate

saturate the acid, dilute it with water, to the strength you wish, gum with gum Arabic.

*N. B.* The earth of alum is procured by precipitating it from alum, by means of fixed alkaline salt; this is to be well washed, to saturate as above-mentioned.

No. 7.

*Liquid Green.*

Take and mix verdigrease with the yellow before-mentioned.

Or,

Take half a pound of verdigrease, quarter of a pound of white Tartar, dissolve in one quart of distilled water, by boiling, then filter the liquor.

Or,

Mix the indigo blue with the liquid yellow.

### OBSERVATION.

MIX No. 1 with No. 3, for fine carmine purple.

Mix No. 1 with No. 4, for fine orange.

Mix No. 1 with No. 6, for a fine colour, for wood, trees, &c.

Mix



Mix No. 3 with No. 4, and you have the colour of bistre superb.

Mix No. 3 with No. 5, and you have bistre extremely deep.

Mix No. 2 with No. 3, and you have a fine aurora colour; a little blue makes it a fine brown.

*N. B.* The above colours are fine for dying feathers, hair, silks, paper, &c. for artificial flowers, or for miniature painters, if evaporated in saucers.

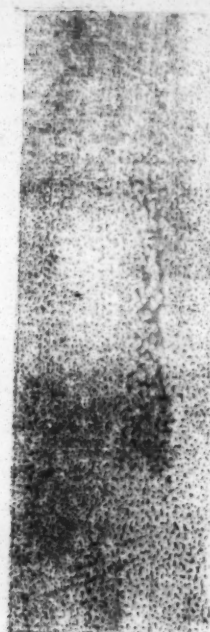
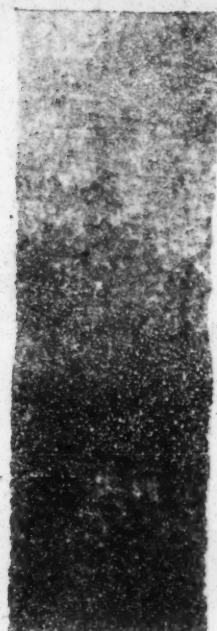
Those who do not chuse to prepare their own colours, may be supplied at most colour shops.

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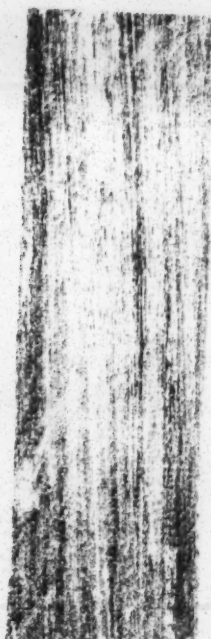
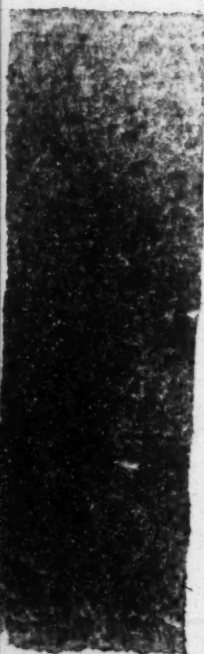
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4

5

6



29 E 13

## EXPLANATION OF THE PLATES.

## PLATE I.

The small landscape in the title-page is first etched with a needle, the ground is rosin, in the foliage of the tree, also in the fore ground, is the fine tint, as mentioned in page 21, with the Burgundy pitch, after the rosin tint was finished, and the plate well cleaned, the same tint is also seen on the road, in small touches, also crossing it on the fore ground, in a strong shade, the appearance of birds in the dark cloud was stopped out, as well as the light part of the house and sky.

## PLATE II.

*The Profile.*

First outlined, the ground rosin, but the fine shades of the drapery the fine ground No. 9, the fore a deeper tint of rosin, as this shows distinctly the effect of it, I have not thrown the fine ground over it, to make it uniformly black.

## PLATE III.

No. 4, is mastich or juniper ground, this requires a degree of heat to fix it, as would run

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the

the rosin together, as mentioned in page 18, and the tint appearing uneven, as in No. 2; on the contrary, the same heat that fixed No. 5 of rosin, No. 1 with mastich, on pouring on the aquafortis, came off, and gave the appearance in the plate, instead of No. 4. If your spirit of wine be not good, or a small quantity of camphor in it, where it is laid on the plate, gives No. 3, appearing in small fragments, instead of the even tint, as is seen in Plate I. If you repeatedly draw your brush over it, till it is set, you have then the appearance of No. 6. The Plate on which the above is tinted, appears dirty, so left in order to show the care that is required in burnishing, as in this you clearly see the marks of the burnishing iron, instead of being a fair white; in short, this plate was merely to show mistakes, that every one may in some measure be on their guard.

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